

Understanding LGBTQ+ Identity

A Toolkit for Educators

Real-time Tips Handout

Many educators may feel uncertain about how to effectively combat anti-LGBTQ behavior in an appropriate way. This handout is designed to provide educators with real-time tips to help address discrimination in schools in order to create more inclusive learning spaces.

INTERVENE

It is important to establish a “no-tolerance” policy regarding discriminatory language and insensitivity toward the LGBTQ community. In order to do so, educators must not only recognize instances of homophobia/transphobia, but must also shut down these instances immediately and remind students that this type of behavior is unacceptable.

Classroom Tips...

A common example of homophobia seen in schools is the use of the expression “that’s so gay.” The script below can be used to intervene when you hear this type of language used by your students.

- 1. NAME THE INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR:** [Name of Student], we don’t use people’s identities as insults at [Name of School].
- 2. NAME THE REPLACEMENT BEHAVIOR:** We value and respect one another here.
- 3. END THE CONVERSATION:** Thank you.

EVOKE CONVERSATIONS

All students will encounter LGBTQ people or those who have LGBTQ family members and friends; however, many students may not know much about this community or may only be familiar with myths and stereotypes. It is important for students to learn about the LGBTQ community in order to understand and respect LGBTQ people. Encouraging respectful conversations in the classroom that are centered on LGBTQ issues is a great way to educate your students, and promoting understanding through conversation can help eradicate teasing, bullying, and harassment.

Classroom Tips...

- If you overhear conversations about LGBTQ+ (negative or positive), use these “teachable moments” to respectfully address these issues. This can include micro-aggressions. Sometimes students may not be fully aware that some expressions they use are offensive to the LGBTQ community. It is especially important to discuss this with students.
- Many current events involve LGBTQ+ issues. Invite students to discuss their thoughts in a respectful manner. Make sure students understand the boundaries and expectations of the conversations, such as respect, and no hate speech or bullying

CELEBRATE DIFFERENCES

Creating a culture of respect in the classroom is essential to ensuring all students feel valued, welcome, and safe. By celebrating the differences in all types of people, we encourage LGBTQ students to feel comfortable being who they are. Fostering a respectful community in our classrooms that respects and supports all learners is essential to creating inclusive learning spaces.

Classroom Tips...

- Remind students often that not everyone is alike. There are many different kinds of people in the world who enjoy many different kinds of things.
- Encourage self-expression in the classroom, give students the platform to share what makes them different.
- Normalize same-sex household families by providing non-heterosexual examples in your lessons.
- Assign reading materials that represent a variety of diverse characters and cultures.

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

Teachers and administrators should work hard to make their classrooms and schools places where every student feels welcome. Any educator can be a resource for LGBTQ students. Whether you are a part of the LGBTQ community yourself or an ally, outwardly showing your support at school can help students identify you as a safe person to talk to and come to for support.

Classroom Tips...

- Create a GSA (Gender Sexuality Alliance) at your school. GSAs are student-led organizations found in schools that are intended to provide a safe and supportive environment for LGBTQ youth and their straight allies.
- Hang LGBTQ support posters or flags in the classroom.
- Model acceptance in thought, words, and actions.

EDUCATE YOURSELF

It all starts with awareness! Educators may feel unsure how to support their LGBTQ students in a meaningful way. By seeking out opportunities to learn more about the LGBTQ community we can become better able to support LGBTQ students in our schools.

Classroom Tips...

- Utilize the great resources available for free in the Understanding LGBTQ+ Identity: A Toolkit for Educators collection on [PBSLearningMedia.org](https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/understanding-lgbtq-identity-a-toolkit-for-educators).
- Attend LGBTQ focused professional development workshops and trainings.
- Have discussions with friends who identify as LGBTQ. Talk about what they would want people to know about them to promote understanding and respect.